



ENDANGERED SPECIES? – The ranks of cranberry harvesters continue to dwindle in town, as a tight market makes it hard for cranberry farmers to make a profit.

Cranberry Growers Face Another Tough Season

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"Everyone thought there was great profit in it, so everyone went into it, from Canada to Poland to Russia. Canada used to get cranberries from us. Now they're one of the biggest markets," Merry said.

Merry grows cranberries for Ocean Spray. He says the company is allowing local growers to sell 200 barrels privately this year. He also hopes that a current campaign to promote the health benefits of cranberries will help make future growing seasons more profitable.

"Production is down because there is no incentive. Growers can't get sufficient return to pay for the harvesting," Merry said.

Merry owns 58 acres of cranberry bogs. Currently he is harvesting about 45 acres. His crop will be small, he says, because he hasn't used herbicides and hasn't fertilized and irri-

gated as much as he should have. Hot temperatures also result in smaller berries.

"Smaller growers will continue to go out of business. There's a study that says a grower needs 60 acres to support the average family. The average cranberry grower in Massachusetts has about 12 acres," Merry said.

Merry recently painted his pump house on Temple Street, and plans to start selling his 200 barrels of berries this week.

"We'll sell to whoever comes by," Merry said.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, Massachusetts produced 1.42 million barrels of cranberries in 2001, a 27 percent decrease from the 2000 harvest. Total acres harvested also dropped, from 13,900 in 2000 to 12,000 in 2001.

The average price per barrel for cranberries in 2001 was \$21.60 per barrel.

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Local cranberry growers are facing another tough year, and bogs in town are suffering the effects of continually not being harvested.

"The bogs in town are going into disrepair. It's a shame. Cranberry harvesting is the last type of agriculture in town," said Conservation Agent Joe Grady. "A lot of the farmers have stopped harvesting. It's not profitable for them."

Town-owned bogs are leased to growers, who manage and harvest the bogs. All the bogs are currently leased, according to Grady, though some remain inactive. Leases are typically for five years.

Stanley Merry of Merryland



Cranberry harvesters can still be spotted about town, but the crop this year will be small.

Cranberries, one of the few cranberry growers still harvesting in town, agrees that this is another tough year for small growers.

"There's been a terrific cranberry depression for about eight years," Merry said

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